

## IPS Endowment Grant Recipient: Mijoro Rakotoarinivo

from Cindy Adair

Each year, the IPS considers applications for grants from the IPS Endowment Fund. At the 2010 IPS Biennial in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the Board of Directors awarded a small research grant to, among others, Mijoro Rakotoarinivo.

Mijoro is the Kew Madagascar Conservation Centre and Geographic Information Science Unit Manager and Palms Conservation Officer.

According to the Kew web site, "the main responsibility is a database that contains Kew's collection data for Madagascar and ensuring that the data are of sufficient quality for systematics research, distribution mapping, conservation assessments, ecological profiling and climate change modelling." The overall aim of this research is "to improve the conservation management of endangered palm species and our understanding of patterns of diversity for Madagascar."

Recently, Endowment Chair Cindy Adair reached out to him to ask about his experience. **"The IPS grant for carrying on fieldwork really helped me in searching for palms across Madagascar. Thanks to IPS, several new species have been discovered in the wild and many others have been seen again in their natural habitat after decades of uncertainty"**.

Photo top right: *Ravenea* sp. Brickaville, Madagascar  
Bottom right: *Dypsis coursii*, Marojejy, Madagascar Photos copyright M. Rakotoarinivo, RBG Kew





Figure 1. *Syagrus comosa* with fruit near Chapada dos Guimarães in the state of Mato Grosso

**Larry Noblick was asked to give members an idea of what it's like to be a botanist out working in the field. He replied with a sketch of two days of palm collecting in the geographic center of South America.**

# Two Days in the Field in Brazil

by Larry Noblick



Figure 2. Larry next to a simple monument making the Geographical Center of South America.

*Last January and February, I spent 6 weeks in Brazil. Much of that time was spent in the field and the following are just two days (Jan 12-13) copied more or less directly from my journal.*

**January 12, 2014:** Harri Lorenzi and I left Rondonopolis (Mato Grosso) early and just north of Jesiara, we investigated an open cerrado (a grassy plain) and collected *Astrocaryum echinatum* (once thought to be extinct) in fruit. We then continued past Cuiaba to the near the Parque Nacional da Chapada dos Guimarães. We found a nice stand of *Syagrus comosa* with fruit (Fig. 1), but I had to hurry the collection along as it was threatening rain and there was lots of thunder and lightning, but in the end little rain fell where I was. I was able to make five good fruit collections, but I was concerned that this fruit may be compromised by seed parasites (mainly beetle larvae). We next drove to Monumento de Pedra (Rock Monument) and I got a good look at the acaulescent *Syagrus* in this area. It is not a large plant and it has (usually) very narrow leaflets. Its dark green color contrasts with many of the grasses. The palms are well camouflaged within the thicker grassy areas. However in this area the specimens were widely scattered. Next we drove to the Centro Geodesico de America (Geographical center of South America. Fig. 2). There was a wonderful view of the Chapada (Fig. 3), and we found a few specimens of this new *Syagrus* growing in the grassy cerrado near the outlook and monument. We then left there and headed back to Cuiaba. I spend the evening (and a large part of the night) measuring plant material and pressing plants.



Figure 4. "Bridal Veil Falls" in Chapada dos Guimarães Nacional Park.

To learn more about Larry Noblick, visit his bio [HERE](#)..

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Figure 3. View of the Chapada from the Geographical Center of South America

**January 13, 2014:** In the morning, we went to the Federal University to check out their dried palm collections. Then we went to the National Park Office (Chapada dos Guimarães). After showing our permit and obtaining proper permission, we collected 10 palms of the new species near "Bridal veil Falls" (Fig. 4), close to the park office. The palm is abundant here throughout the grasslands, but difficult to see when the grass has not burned for several years (Fig. 5). There were few plants flowering in January and even fewer with ripening fruits. As we were parking the car at the park office near "Bridal Veil Falls," Harri noticed a problem with the steering. Then as we were leaving, we noticed that the battery was not charging right, the steering was difficult and a short distance down the road we began to overheat. We discovered that the hydraulic pump went bad, put pressure on the pulleys and caused the serpentine belt to slip off. We would have to wait until late the next day for the new part to arrive from Cuiaba. So we stayed the night in the village of the Chapada dos Guimarães. ~~~



Figure 5. Larry collecting a grass-like *Syagrus* near "Bridal Veil Falls" in the Chapada dos Guimarães National Park

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